

Testimony in Support of HB 6664
An Act Concerning Managing Waste and Creating a Waste Authority

March 5, 2023

Dear Honored Co-Chairs Sen. Lopes and Rep. Gresko, Vice Chairs Sen. Hochadel and Rep. Palm, Ranking Members Sen. Harding and Rep. Callahan, Distinguished Members of the Environment Committee:

I have been interested in environmental issues for over thirty years and have been an avid recycler. It was extremely discouraging to have recently learned that very little of the plastic I have carefully rinsed and separated is ever actually recycled. I try personally to avoid wasting anything, and reuse whatever I can. But EVERYTHING I buy seems to be wrapped in some kind of plastic! I prefer to buy things in paper or glass, which I know is actually recycled. But plastics (other than #1 and #2) are basically always trash. (A lie promulgated by the petroleum industry to make us all think we are doing the right thing and they are not responsible. But the petroleum industry IS to blame, and plastic is very cheap to make as it uses chemicals that are refinery byproducts that would not otherwise be used.)

Money is the primary thing that matters to many businesses, and most try to save money by using the cheapest kind of packaging they can: plastic. But plastic has become way too prevalent everywhere in our environment and in our bodies and the bodies of nearly every other creature on earth. We must stop polluting our planet with plastic, and use it only when it is really necessary. Use of single-use plastic items must avoided wherever possible.

We must shift the environmental cost of plastic back to the manufacturers -- in order to give them a financial incentive to find alternative materials. (For consumers, there is little reason to try to recycle most plastics, as new will always be cheaper.) It is unfair for all of us to pay for the "cheapness of plastic" by making towns pay more for disposing of increasing amounts of plastic through trash tipping fees. The ultimate costs of plastic should be included in the products we buy, so we can "speak with our pocketbooks" and not buy things that include the expense of plastics. This will provide manufacturers with the financial incentive they need. It will also not burden those who try to avoid plastic with the growing municipal solid waste fees when they are not contributing to waste.

I am testifying to urge your support of Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging as a major step that our state can take to address the solid waste crisis. EPR represents a critical step in stabilizing our waste management system and incentivizing producers and vendors to adopt more sustainable packaging.

- EPR for packaging will promote **increased recycling** by creating stable funding and standardizing waste-management practices in Connecticut. EPR for packaging in other

states, Canadian provinces, and countries in Europe has resulted in greatly improved recycling rates, according to a [study by the Recycling Partnership](#).

- EPR for packaging will provide **education and outreach** that will reduce “wishcycling” and contamination, thereby improving the quality of the material collected and its potential for reuse. It can also increase participation in waste-reduction programs.
- EPR for packaging will **make producers responsible and accountable**. It will initiate change in a corporate culture that has hitherto maximized single-use products and encouraged wastefulness. It will incentivize producers to make more sustainable packaging.
- EPR for packaging will **relieve municipalities** of a heavy financial burden and shift waste-management costs to corporations that profit from the sale of packaged products. Revenue from an EPR program can fund the construction and operation of more versatile recycling facilities.
- DEEP estimates EPR for packaging will **divert 190,000 tons of waste** annually and save Connecticut’s municipalities \$50 million dollars in tipping fees.

Thank you very much for your careful consideration of these issues.

Sincerely yours,

Leslie Starr
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